

Milne's Play of Literary Fraud Most Amusing

'The Truth About Blayds,' Drama of English Life Produced at the Booth.

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

A. A. Milne has slowly made his way here as the author of well written, fanciful and sometimes amusing comedies of English life, which are perhaps more characteristic of the country of the playwright than rich in any other. Mr. Milne is uncompromisingly British in every attribute. His work has been humorous in his national way. Last night, however, Winthrop Ames introduced the dramatist in a new light. He gave for the first time here "The Truth About Blayds," which has met with success in London despite the appearance of the writer of comedies in a new mood. The play is rather grimly satirical. In mood it would suggest the sly grimness of Pinero in "The Thunderbolt" and Barker in "The Voyage Inheritance," were it not for the fastidious humor which the playwright brought to the play. And these are specimens of the deepest sort of British drabness. "The Truth About Blayds" concerns a long continued literary forgery. The name of the man who has been writing for another, although he has grown rich and honored among the other eminent poets of the Victorian period, the protagonist of Milne's drama, is never written on one book that is a part of the corner of his fame. It is one of his avowedly mediocre efforts. Those which have placed him so high in the world of letters are the work of a friend, dead and moved and despoiled by him of the writings on which the other climbed to renown. The first act shows him in the sunset of his glory. Deputizing to visit the old poet and pay him deference on his nineteenth birthday in the mansion over which he rules with a kindly despotism. The audience saw him listening to the address from the younger writers which a critic brought to him. They saw his family paying him his deference and saw the old man intimate to the daughter who had sacrificed her life in his service that he had something serious to whisper to her alone.

Gone in Second Act.

He is gone when the second act begins. It looks as if all the pride and happiness of his rather self-satisfied descendants were gone with him. He has confessed to this devoted daughter the fraud which made him a great man in letters. She will bring the biography to an end at once and tell the truth. Then the fortune hunter goes on where it belongs. Her important brother-in-law, who as his secretary has always stood in a reflected glory, refuses to denude himself of all his honors at once. So the family goes on as before. The daughter, at the possible mental derangement of the old man which has led him to imagine such a story. How could a man who had written a famous poem to truth live such a lie as one of the family quarters? There seems no way of settling the question until Mr. Milne remembers the lines about wills in Jerome K. Jerome's treatise on the subject.

So the will is found. This testament of the old friend who wrote the verse in the first instance bequeaths everything to his friend who posed so long as the poet. This is of course, one way—a stage way—out. Mr. Milne did not finish his study of Jerome—not the saint but the playwright—at this point. He saw the end of "The Truth About Blayds" in view. But what sort of an ending should it be? See Jerome on endings. Why a happy one? Why could not the critic who was in the first act marry the daughter, the daughter, who was in reality for the truth and ought to be rewarded? He has been out of the scrap, as it were, and might be a great deal less useful in this way. He is—the play finishes happily if artificially.

Knew His Strength Well.

Yet Milne, after all, knew his strength well enough to take such a chance with his public. It is doubtful if such a theatrical expedient as the long lost will and the second wedding of the faithful spinner interfered in the least degree with delight in the pleasure which the first act contains for the spectator and the agreeable access to be found in the second and last act.

The vein of the opening scenes is altogether one of agreeably satirical comedy. The gross improbability of the long drawn out imposture chills for the minute the interest of the most engrossed spectator. After a while, however, to enjoy everything. After all it is easy to fancy that the intelligent spectator may be saying to himself, there is something to be great deal less truth about this play than we thought in the first act. But there is no earthly reason why we should not take all the other fine qualities out of it.

And these qualities are numerous. The play is almost constantly amusing. It is written with the distinction one might expect from a playwright of more than casual culture. It is in this respect far above the average. So "The Truth About Blayds" ought to prove irresistible to every lover of the best in the theater. Winthrop Ames's adept manner of putting the work before the public enhances every charm it possesses. Miss Alexandra Carlyle acts the self-sacrificing daughter with a lovely blend of womanly fascination and a lady's family devotion. Miss Vane Featherstone gave a humorous portrait of the faithful but somewhat confused daughter who wanted to do the best, but is torn loyal to her husband, Ferdinand Gottschalk as the pompous and fussy son-in-law was constantly laughable in his fatuousness, while Gilbert Emery, although a great deal less than a star, played with the repose and uncommon distinction.

The younger generation was faithfully but rather alternately presented by Miss Frieda, an altogether comely specimen of the flapper, and Leslie Howard. But the old fashioned British interior by Bel Geddes—well, possibly every production is entitled to one observation in a performance. Yet the selection of O. P. Heggie for the old poet was compensatory flash of managerial genius.

TECH SHOW APRIL 5.

Students to Appear Here in "Guess Again, Professor."

"Guess Again, Professor" is the title of the variety show which Stevens Tech will present on April 5 at the Hotel Astor. It deals with the follies and amenities of collegiate life, as seen from the student viewpoint. It is interspersed with a number of musical offerings. The "book" is the work of John R. Hemm, Jr., of Princeton, a member of the senior class, and the music was written by Carl P. Good of South Orange, N. J., a junior. The action takes place in 1912. The cast and orchestra are composed entirely of Stevens undergraduates. The production is coached by William A. Holloran, who coached "You Know Me, Al" and "Let's Beat It," two plays of the Twenty-seventh Division. The variety show will be given in conjunction with the annual Stevens night. The latter is an annual event and will be attended by many prominent engineers in the metropolitan district.

K. and E. Wins Suit for 1,175 Shares of Famous Players

Original Contract Was for Exchange of Stock for That of Charles Frohman, Inc.

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

A suit tried in the Supreme Court in January in which the former firm of Klaw & Erlanger sued the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation for the enforcement of a contract by which they were to receive 1,175 shares of stock in the corporation in exchange for stock in Famous Players-Lasky, Inc., was decided in favor of Klaw & Erlanger yesterday by Justice Lehman. The contract of which they will receive the benefit was made originally between Klaw & Erlanger and just after Charles Frohman met his death in the sinking of the Lusitania. An agreement was entered into between Frohman's heirs and his creditors by which his interests were to be kept active for several years in order not to decrease their value by liquidating them suddenly. Klaw & Erlanger, who had been among his closest associates and had lent him a large amount of money, objected when the agreement was drawn up and were a party to the suit. It was agreed to give them stock in the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, then forming, in place of their Frohman stock. The separate agreement between him and them set forth: "For consideration received it is understood and agreed that I shall deliver to you 10 per cent of all and any common stock of the corporation to which I am entitled or may at any time receive."

The contract is binding both on Klaw & Erlanger and on the corporation, and that the former partners are entitled to the stock with its earnings since 1916.

REVUE AT THE FIOTILLA.

Dancing a Feature at Nautical Restaurant.

At three bells of the second dog watch in the S. S. Flotilla restaurant last night they introduced a nautical revue, with fifteen principals and a chorus of sixteen pretty girls, and repeated it during supper. This innovation in the nautical eating place, owned by Special Deputy Police Commissioner Harris, seemed to make a great hit with those who like a theatrical entertainment with the roast. They called it "The Flotilla," and it was produced by Percy Elkes. A San Francisco girl called Princess Flotilla, Juanita Means, the Carlton Sisters, Bacon and Pontine, who do a Spanish dance on ships, and Lesley Worcester, who are the principals who danced. Chorus girls represented vampires of all the periods from the prehistoric to the present, and cast horoscopes at the guests. Princess Flotilla was seen in South Sea dances, including an effective dream dance.

Notes of the Stage

The usual Tuesday postponement after the usual opening Monday evening notices the usual postponement. The first performance of Walker Whiteside in "The Blue Kites" at the Booth Theatre, which was shifted till next Tuesday evening, probably to give the scenery further time to get into shape. The premiere of Bernard Shaw's "Candida," which Ellen Van Volkenburg and her company are presenting at the Booth Theatre (where repertory seasons are being frequently announced), has been changed from Monday night to Wednesday. The premiere of "The Flotilla," which was to be given on Monday night, has been changed from Monday night to Wednesday. The premiere of "The Flotilla," which was to be given on Monday night, has been changed from Monday night to Wednesday.

Health

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The tempered climate, glorious sunshine, bright blue skies and bracing salt sea air; the fascinating Boardwalk with its roller chairs and throngs of promenaders; comfortable sunbathers and swimmers of the highest order, with GOLF, MOTORING, HORSEBACK RIDING ON THE BEACH, PIERCE, THEATRES, MOVIES, CONCERTS, ETC. Countless shops, displaying choicest wares and fashions. Renewed vitality and continued well-being—YOU SHOULD BE IN ATLANTIC CITY.

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Marlborough-Blenheim Hotel E. H. O'Connell, Prop.

Albion Hotel E. H. O'Connell, Prop.

Hotel Traymore E. H. O'Connell, Prop.

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CINCINNATI THEATER ANNOYS FAVERSHAM Cannot Get 'Squaw Man' Into the Cox Playhouse.

Special Dispatch to THE NEW YORK HERALD.

CINCINNATI, March 14.—William Faversham, famed and fretted through three acts of the opening performance of "The Squaw Man" at the Cox Theatre, a shubert house, last night, then had the curtain raised and made a speech that caused the audience to gasp.

"Illusion on the stage is necessary for artistic interpretation," said Mr. Faversham, "and when we cannot create that illusion we fail. After spending thousands of dollars on a production I am forced to open on a stage that is designed for drawing room sets. Half of my production is in the alley, because we have no room to set it up. It is impossible to create an illusion when the audience is asked to look at mountains and trees which, under the inadequate lighting facilities look like wood and canvas."

"Then, too, at this theater we have no music. It is necessary to my play to have music. The Indian love lyrics which are part of the piece and which are most important to the creation of its atmosphere have to be entirely cut out. The theater has no orchestra, and when we attempted to secure musicians we discovered that we would have to engage ten men. They wanted \$30 a week and their leader \$100. Then we tried to hire one musician to play on the stage, but were informed that if we did the stage hands would walk out."

"If I did not have so much respect for my audience I would not have opened to-night. Under such conditions how can Cincinnati expect the best in the theatrical line? Until such time as you can provide adequate theaters and surroundings and are willing to patronize them you cannot look forward to great productions. Art thrives on money."

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